

FBI Bugging Of Chilean Offices Told

Book Says Hoover Forced CIA to Halt Surveillance in '72

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The FBI reluctantly bugged the Chilean Embassy in Washington during the Salvador Allende regime and then forced the Central Intelligence Agency to agree to end the surveillance, according to a forthcoming book about the U.S. intelligence community.

The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover stopped the bugging in February of 1972 by threatening to tell Congress that it was being done at the CIA's insistence, author David Wise reports.

According to the account in Wise's new book, "The American Police State":

"Hoover initially refused to install the eavesdropping equipment when the CIA first requested it in mid-April of 1971. A few days later, however, then-CIA Director Richard Helms went over Hoover's head and got Attorney General John N. Mitchell to reverse the FBI director's decision.

"The CIA delivered sophisticated bugging equipment to the FBI three days later, and between April 27 and mid-May, the FBI got into the embassy and installed several mikes."

For more than eight months, the government listened in to conversations taking place inside the embassy, Wise reported. The Chilean ambassador to the United States at the time was Orlando Letelier, who was assassinated here Sept. 21, 1976, when a bomb blew up the car he was driving a short distance from the embassy building.

Around early February of 1972, Hoover threatened to blow the whistle. The FBI director may have been "still smarting over being reversed by Mitchell," Wise wrote, but he added in a telephone interview that he did not know why Hoover chose to give the ultimatum when he did.

In any case, Wise said, citing CIA

documents about the episode, the CIA caved in promptly and hastily asked that the eavesdropping be stopped. Accordingly, On Feb. 3, 1972, "the FBI either went in and pulled out the miniature transmitters or turned them off by remote control."

Hoover died on May 2, 1972. Less than two weeks later, on the weekend of May 13-15, the Chilean embassy was burglarized in a crime that persistent rumors have attributed to one or more of the Watergate burglars but that still remains unsolved.

In its investigation of the embassy break-in, the book discloses, the FBI was unable to question a potentially important witness in Miami who had reportedly told an FBI informant that one of the Watergate burglars was involved. The potential witness, a Cuban exile in Miami, was murdered in the spring of 1974, apparently shortly after the bureau had set out to question him but before they managed to locate him.

According to Wise, the Chilean embassy was not only burglarized but it was also bugged once again after Hoover's death. According to CIA documents, he said, the agency asked the FBI to "reinstitute coverage" on Dec. 8, 1972, a step that the State Department also "strongly urged."

This time, the Hoover-less FBI apparently complied without protest. "By the day after Christmas [1972] the

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bugs were broadcasting again although there is some evidence," Wise writes, "they may have been turned off or removed again in February 1973."

Voicing some skepticism about the apparent lack of any electronic surveillance for some 10 months in 1972, Wise added that "the chronology is almost too good to be true, for it has both agencies messing around with the Chilean embassy at almost every time except several months on either side of the May 1972 date."

The President of Chile during the period in question, Salvador Allende, was a Marxist whose 1970 election the CIA had tried to block on President Nixon's orders. The plan failed, but the CIA spent \$8 million between 1970 and 1973 to undermine Allende. He died in a military coup that brought down his government in September, 1973.

In other disclosures, the book quotes former Nixon White House

aide John D. Ehrlichman's vivid recollections of an Oct. 1, 1969, dinner at Hoover's home that Nixon attended along with Ehrlichman and Attorney General Mitchell.

That night, Wise said Ehrlichman told him, "for hours, Hoover regaled us with stories of 'black bag' jobs, hair-raising escapes, and so on. 'Wonderful,' the President kept saying, 'How about that, John?'"